

**Lisa Thomson, REDAPPLES of Norwalk**  
Appropriations Committee Hearing, 2/21/13

Good Evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee: My name is Lisa Brinton Thomson and I am speaking today in favor of Gov. Dannel P. Malloy's education budget proposals.

I am a founding member of REDAPPLES of Norwalk, a grassroots non-partisan community coalition organized around improving Norwalk Public Schools by advocating for systemic reform. I know that you, our elected leaders, must make some very difficult decisions this year - you must decide which essential services can weather deep fiscal cuts.

I believe that, when it comes to education, we cannot afford to back down. We need your leadership to ensure that keep the promise our state makes to educating children. One of the most important pieces of education reform in Connecticut is our system for evaluating and supporting educators. Without a comprehensive system of talent identification and accountability implemented in every school in the state, we cannot make good on that promise.

Last year's education reform bill required statewide implementation of evaluations that would help guarantee every student in every classroom would have an excellent teacher. In his budget proposal, Governor Malloy includes funds to support this key component of reform, and makes good on the promise to ensure that educators receive the support and guidance they need to be best teachers they possibly can for our children.

As we know, the most critical component of a child's education is having an excellent teacher in the classroom and a great principal running their school. When the state began implementing its System for Educator Evaluation and Development, it made a commitment to students, teachers, schools and districts that the best educators would be singled out for being the best, and the rest would be afforded the opportunity to improve.

I strongly urge the committee to support the governor's recommendations for funding talent development. Public Act 12-116, which the legislature passed almost unanimously last year, put the new teacher and principal evaluation system into motion. It is way too important to our children to be delayed, slowed down, or held back because of lack of funding. We are looking for your leadership to ensure that every child has access to a great teacher and every teacher has the tools and feedback they need to be his or her very best.

Our educators and our students deserve your commitment and I respectfully ask the committee to make good on the promise made to them last year.

Thank you.